per month and upto 50% of the highest pay in the Government.

(2) The maximum limit of retirement gratuity/death gratuity has been increased from Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 2.5 lakhs w.e.f. 1.4.95 and, subsequently, upto Rs. 3.5 lakhs w.e.f. 1.1.96.

(3) The minimum limit of family pension has been raised from Rs. 375/- to Rs. 1275/- per month. Further family pension shall be calculated at a uniform rate of 30% of basic pay in all cases instead of the slab system of 30%, 20% and 15%.

(4) Parents wholly dependent on the Government servant when he/she was alive have been included in the definition of 'family' provided the deceased employee has left behind neither widow nor child.

(5) The limit of commutation of pension has been raised from 33% to 40% of the pension from 1.1.1996.

(6) Ex-gratia payment in respect of CPF retirees and their family members has been revised with the benefit of Dearness Relief notified from time to time

(7) A fixed amount of Rs. 100/- per month has been allowed as Medical Allowance to Central Government pensioners residing in areas not covered under CGHS.

(8) The limit of GPF Deposit-linked Insurance Scheme has been enhanced from Rs. 30,000/- to Rs. 60,000/-

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Role of National Seeds Corporation

1664. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) what is the role of the National Seeds Corporation (NSC);

(b) whether there is any plan to expand the NSC;

(c) what are the accumulated losses;

(d) whether any joint ventures are mooted by the National Seeds Corporation; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) The National Seeds Corporation (NSC), a public sector undertaking under the administrative control of the Ministry of Agriculture, Department Agriculture & Cooperation, was established in the year 1963 under the Companies Act, 1956. The objectives for which the Corporation was established were to produce and distribute seeds of high quality to the farmers and also to bring about awareness among the farming community towards utilisation of high quality seeds for ensuring better yields. It undertakes the production of breeder seeds in its own farms and foundation and certified seeds through contract growers, Agricultural Universities, State Seeds Corporation and State Farms Corporation of India. Apart from its commercial activities, NSC is serving an important objective of producing and distributing the seeds of such crops which are not commercially profitable.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) The accumulated losses of the NSC were to the tune of Rs. 14.86 crore as per audited accounts of the years ending 31.3.1997.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Does not arise.

Starvation Deaths in the Country

1665. SHRI RAJUBHAI A PARMAR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the number of starvation deaths reported from different States, and

drought affected areas of the country including Orissa, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan during 1996-97, 1997-98 and 1998-99;

(b) whether Government's attentation had been drawn to the news-item published in the Hindu of April 17, 1998 captioned "Woman dies of Starvation" reporting recovery of a dead woman's body and other family members writhing in pain from Bhadoti town of Sawai Madhopur district of Rajasthan; and

(c) what comprehensive steps have been taken to ensure that no body dies of hunger and starvation in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) No reports on starvation deaths have been received from the State Governments during 1995-96 to 1998-99 (so far).

(b) The Government of Rajasthan has reported that the reported death was due to disease and not be due to starvation.

(c) It is Primarily the responsibility of the State Governments concerned to provide relief to the people affected by natural calamities. The Central Government only supplements the efforts of the State Governments by providing additional resources in accordance with the recommendations of the Finance Commission appointed from time to time.

'Root Wilt' Disease in coconut Plantations

1666. SHRI YERRA NARAYANA-SWAMY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether any efforts have fructified in controlling 'Rootwilt' disease in coconut plantations;

(b) what is the extent of this disease in the Southern States;

(c) whether production of coconuts has fallen due to this disease;

(d) what are the major impediments to improve productivity in coconut plantations; and

(e) what steps have been taken to improve the productivity in cocount plantations in Andhra Pradesh?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) Efforts made so far have not fructified in controlling Cocount 'Root Wilt' disease.

(b) Information received from States indicates that the disease is prevalent in 4.10 lakh hectares in Kerala and 107 hectares in Tamilnadu. A survey conducted during 1996-97 reveals that about 165.50 lakh palms are affected by the disease in Kerala out of which about 80 lakh palms are in advance stage of the disease. In case of Tamilandu, about 20,000 Cocount palms are affected by the disease.

(c) In advance stage of "Root Wilt" disease incidence, significant reduction in yield occurs. According to a survey conducted during 1984, the annual loss due to this disease is about 968 million nuts.

(d) The major impediments in improving the productivity of Coconut as informed by Coconut Development Board are:

(1) Prevalence of the following diseases:

(a) "Root Wilt" in Kerala;

(b) "Thanjavur Wilt" in Tamilnadu;

(c) "Ganoderma Wilt" in Karnataka;

(d) "Tatipaka" in Andhra Pradesh.

(2) Lack of irrigation facilities.

(3) Low use of production inputs and poor management practices.

(4) Large number of small holdings.

(e) The following programmes are implemented by the Coconut Development Board in Andhra Pradesh